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Governor

Roberta Gassman
Secretary



State of Wisconsin

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Thursday, September 14, 2006

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Secretary Gassman Awards Training Grant for Healthcare Workers

Aurora Hospital in Burlington receives \$20,000 to help healthcare workers avoid back injuries

Burlington – Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced a \$20,000 grant for Aurora Health Care – Memorial Hospital of Burlington, the latest grant awarded as part of Governor Jim Doyle's Safe Lifting Initiative to help nurses and other healthcare workers avoid injuries when moving patients.

"Healthcare workers, especially nurses, are among workers at greatest risk of back injuries and Governor Doyle's Safe Lifting Initiative will help minimize that risk by providing training dollars," Secretary Gassman said. "Without the proper equipment and training, nurses can seriously injure themselves and their patients when lifting or moving patients. Everybody wins when we prevent such injuries – nurses, nursing assistants and others remain on the job and patients get the health care they need when they need it."

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, six of the top ten occupations at highest risk for back injuries are in health care. Depending on the severity, such injuries can sideline workers temporarily or end their careers entirely. The risk of injuries can also discourage others from nursing or other health care careers at a time of labor shortages. These factors can increase the cost of worker's compensation and health care overall.

"Wisconsin is known for providing quality health care," Governor Jim Doyle said. "Our hospitals and care facilities are nationally recognized and respected for the outstanding care provided by our highly-skilled health care professionals. We must provide a safe environment for our health care workers on the job and the patients in their care."

Secretary Gassman awarded the grant to the Southeast Workforce Development Board, which will collaborate with Aurora Memorial Hospital on the demonstration project. A total of \$325,000 in federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) money is funding 18 demonstration projects around the state. A safe lifting environment means that healthcare workers do not lift, shift, or transfer patients without proper equipment.

Colleen Goetzke, a registered nurse and employee health specialist at Aurora Memorial, said the funding would help train approximately 300 employees on safe lifting equipment, including two units purchased last year. The hospital has set a goal of reducing lift injury claims by 30 percent.

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